

# **Crystal Singer Study Guide**

**Crystal Singer by Anne McCaffrey**

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# Plot Summary

"Crystal Singer" by Anne McCaffrey is the first novel in the Crystal Singer trilogy. In this novel, Killashandra learns that the career she has been training ten years for is out of her grasp. Overwhelmed with loss, Killashandra leaves her school and immediately meets a unique young man named Carrik, who is a crystal singer with the Heptite Guild. Although Carrik becomes fatally ill, Killashandra decides to become a crystal singer herself. Killashandra goes through the training and discovers she has natural abilities that will make her the star she has always wanted to be. "Crystal Singer" is a futuristic novel filled with traditional themes of ambition and self-discovery that will satisfy even the most finicky of Anne McCaffrey's fans.

Killashandra learns that she has failed the final tests of her musical education. Since Killashandra always thought she would be a star, she decides to leave the school to avoid becoming second best. Killashandra has never been anywhere other than her native planet, so she decides to go to the spaceport where she might be able to find a job off planet. Suddenly hungry, Killashandra goes to a restaurant where she enjoys a surprisingly good meal. While there, she hears a piercing sound and then overhears a man demanding to speak to the control supervisor. The man claims to be a member of the Heptite Guild, an organization Killashandra has never heard of. When the man, Carrik, learns that Killashandra heard the noise as well, he invites her to join him for the free meal the control supervisor has offered.

Killashandra and Carrik end up spending several weeks together enjoying the more touristy areas of her home planet. When Carrik begins having odd seizures in the night, he tells Killashandra that he must return to Ballybran, the planet where he works. Killashandra insists on going with him. In fact, Killashandra wants to become a crystal singer like Carrik despite his warnings against the profession. When they arrive at the spaceport, Killashandra is detained by her former teacher who is concerned for her. During the delay, a damaged shuttle attempts to land. When the shuttle explodes, Carrik is fatally injured by the final sonic blast. Killashandra escorts his body back to Ballybran, and is rewarded with a thousand credits and a ticket anywhere she wants to go.

Killashandra takes a room on the moon base and arranges to take the tests to become a crystal singer. When Killashandra passes the tests, she is moved to new quarters. The following day, Killashandra and her fellow recruits learn the truth about the dangers of being a crystal singer. A symbiont that protects people on Ballybran enters their bodies upon arrival on the planet and causes an illness within ten days. Those who suffer the illness could also be left with a physical impairment, such as deafness, that will disallow them from becoming crystal singers and force them into a support position that will prevent them from ever leaving the planet. However, the symbiont also keeps the person from growing old and enhances their other senses.

Killashandra decides to become a crystal singer despite the dangers. For the first week, Killashandra and the other recruits attend lectures and help out during a storm, unloading the crystal singer's shuttlecrafts and helping sort their crystals. After ten days,



some of the students begin to fall ill with the symbiont fever. Killashandra, however, makes the transition painlessly and is quickly placed into training for crystal singing. Killashandra moves quickly ahead of the other recruits, causing some resentment. At the same time, Killashandra enters into a romantic affair with the Guild Master, Lanzecki.

Killashandra goes out into the planet to cut crystal for the first time weeks ahead of the others. Killashandra quickly finds a black crystal claim that belonged to a crystal singer who recently died. This allows Killashandra to bring in a large amount of very valuable black crystal. Lanzecki then arranges for Killashandra to install the crystal on and around an ore mining planet so that she can escape the dangerous side effects of the Passover storms. When Killashandra returns, she takes refuge on the moon base with Lanzecki.



# Chapters 1-2

## Chapters 1-2 Summary

Chapter 1. Killashandra learns from Maestro Valdi, her music teacher of ten years, that she failed her final trials because of a minor fault in her voice. Killashandra is devastated because she has always believed she would be a solo performer, and now faces a life of being a teacher or something as equally humiliating. Killashandra packs her things and leaves the school, without a plan or a place to go.

Chapter 2. Killashandra finds herself at the spaceport where it occurs to her that she might find a job off planet somewhere until she decides what to do. Suddenly hungry, Killashandra goes to a restaurant and uses her last remaining student credits to buy a meal. As she finishes her meal, Killashandra suddenly becomes aware of a terrible noise. Moments later, Killashandra hears a man demanding to speak with the control supervisor, claiming that the shuttle that just came in is about to explode. Killashandra joins him and claims she heard the sound too. Therefore, when the control supervisor offers the man a free meal, he makes him include Killashandra. The man tells Killashandra he is Carrik, a crystal singer with the Heptite Guild. Killashandra tells Carrik her sad story and he offers to allow her to join him on his vacation. Carrik, thanks to the Heptite Guild, had unlimited credits to spend.

After checking into a hotel, Killashandra investigates the Heptite Guild on the vidifax. She learns that the guild is very small, allowing a larger opportunity for stars. This appeals to Killashandra. However, there is a no landing designation on the planet and this causes Killashandra some curiosity. Further investigation offers little information about the dangers of the planet or the profession of crystal singing, but offers a great deal of information about the crystal mind on Ballybran, especially the very valuable black crystal.

Killashandra and Carrik spend several enjoyable weeks together enjoying life and the credits he has to spend. However, Carrik begins having seizures at night that leave him in terrible pain. After the second episode, Carrik tells Killashandra it is time for him to return to Ballybran. Killashandra tells him she wants to go with him and become a crystal singer, but he tries to talk her out of it by listing a generic number of dangers involved in the job. Killashandra books their passage back to Ballybran and they go to the spaceport. When Killashandra stops to check her credits, she is taken into custody by the supervisor because her former teacher, Valdi, is worried about her. Killashandra argues with Valdi about her decision to be a crystal singer when she and Carrik suddenly become aware of a shuttle coming in with damaged crystals. Killashandra gets word to the control supervisor and the shuttle reverses out of the spaceport, but still explodes. The final sonic blast causes Carrik to collapse. Killashandra is told he will not recover, but she insists on going with him to Ballybran anyway.



## Chapters 1-2 Analysis

Killashandra is a music student who believed she would be at the top of her profession. However, Killashandra learns that because of a minor flaw in her voice she will never be a professional singer. This is devastating news to a woman who has spent ten years working with only one goal in mind, shutting herself from everything else including the opportunity to make and have friends. For this reason, Killashandra walks away, unable to accept second best.

When Killashandra meets Carrik, it seems like fate. Carrik is a powerful person who seems able to boss people around and make things happen. Not only this, but he has unlimited credits, able to give Killashandra a vacation and a good time in a way she has never experienced. This works to influence Killashandra, to make her feel as though his profession can give her the stardom she has always craved. However, there seem to be a great deal of secrets surrounding this profession, among the people aware of this unique job and the vidifax that should provide information for all citizens. This foreshadows a danger in the profession that could cause Killashandra some terrible harm should she go through with her desire to join it.

As Killashandra and Carrik attempt to leave the planet, Killashandra's former teacher has her detained. The teacher tells her that she is making a mistake by choosing to become a crystal singer. Killashandra resists him, even when Carrik suffers a fatal injury when a shuttle explodes, filling the spaceport with overwhelming sound.



# Chapters 3-4

## Chapters 3-4 Summary

Chapter 3. As the shuttle approaches Ballybran, the captain calls Killashandra to the cockpit so she can see the planet. The trip has been uneventful. Killashandra has asked everyone about Ballybran and the crystal singers, but the captain, Andurs, has been her most reliable source of information. Even he has tried to talk her out of becoming a crystal singer. When they land, Killashandra is met by the Guild Master, Lanzecki, who gives her a thousand credits and a shuttle ticket to anywhere as reward for escorting Carrik back. Killashandra wants to speak to Lanzecki about applying to be a crystal singer, but he quickly dismisses her and moves on. Instead, Killashandra enters the Shankill Moon Base with the other tourists and takes a room. Killashandra then contacts the Guild office and learns how to apply as a recruit. Killashandra learns from the materials sent to her about the crystal and the guild, but none of the things she really wants to learn.

After reading through the guild information, Killashandra goes to the office and sees the crystal displays there. Another candidate tries to speak to Killashandra, but she finds his approach invasive. Killashandra then goes to the catering facilities for a meal. Andurs is there and invites her to join his group. As they eat, Killashandra notices a trio come into the room who behave oddly. Andurs tells her they are crystal singers. Everyone else seems to feel the crystal singers are rude, but Killashandra sees them as stars. Killashandra spends the evening with Andurs who begs her to return to civilization with him when he ships out in a few days.

Chapter 4. Killashandra goes to the guild business office at the beginning of the business day. There she witnesses a space worker named Carigana barge her way into the testing area. Killashandra speaks to two other candidates, Rimbol who was on the shuttle with Carigana and has already past the preliminary tests, and Shillawn, the same candidate who was on the shuttle with Killashandra and pelted her with overly personal questions the day before. They discuss the testing process and then Killashandra, tired of just talking about it, makes her way to the testing area. Killashandra is put through a rigorous batch of tests, including physical, mental, and agility tests. Killashandra tries to assess how she is doing from the reaction of the man giving her instructions, but cannot. However, when the tests are over, Killashandra is informed she has passed and will be moved from her temporary tourist quarters to new guild quarters.

Once Killashandra is settled in her room, Rimbol comes and invites her to join the other candidates in the lounge. Determined not to be antisocial as she was in music school, Killashandra agrees. The candidates discuss the process and the other candidates, gossiping particularly about the ill-mannered Carigana. Killashandra learns that some of the candidates have been waiting for the next step in the process for weeks because



the guild prefers to wait until they have a class of thirty or more before beginning training.

The next morning, the class meets their first instructor, Borella Seal. Borella is a crystal singer who has suffered an injury therefore she has been assigned to tell this class about the dangers of the profession and guide them through their pledges before they are to go to the planet surface. Borella shows the class the bodies of former crystal singers who have been crystalized or burned in accidents. Borella then takes the class into a lecture hall where she explains the dangers of the planet and the symbiont that will enter their bodies to help them survive the dangers of the planet. The process of bonding with the symbiont is dangerous, causing an illness that can leave the victim with a physical impairment that will prevent them from becoming a crystal singer. If a candidate fails to become a crystal singer, they will be assigned a support role and will be banned from ever leaving Ballybran. Borella also explains how the symbiont increases the surviving senses, leaving everyone, but especially the crystal singers, particular sensitive to sound. Storms on the planet can cause a crystal singer to go insane because of the sounds the wind can create. However, Borella displays an intense longing for the crystal and her profession. Carigana asks a lot of questions that disrupts the entire process. However, when Borella leaves the room to allow the students to make their choices, Killashandra quickly stands and announces that she has not come this far to change her mind now.

After leaving the lecture hall, Killashandra is directed into a room with a FSP Civil Service worker who leads her through the pledge she must make before being allowed to travel to Ballybran. Killashandra does not hesitate, but later realizes that she might have been hasty in her decision to take the pledge. Now Killashandra cannot change her mind even if she wants to. Then Killashandra boards the shuttle for the planet surface and overhears Borella and another crystal singer making rude comments about the new candidates.

## Chapters 3-4 Analysis

Killashandra is a strong, determined girl whose dreams of stardom continue to motivate her every action. For this reason, despite Carrik's illness, Killashandra goes to Ballybran determined to train as a crystal singer. Killashandra makes friends with a shuttle captain and hears stories about Ballybran and crystal singer, she even sees a few crystal singers on the moon base, but she does not allow these stories to scare her away. Killashandra wants to be a star and the Heptite Guild, as small as it is, seems to be her best option of doing that.

Killashandra passes the first phase of the crystal singer training and listens to more warnings about the dangers of crystal singing. At this point in the novel, it is important for the reader to note the information about the symbiont, the illness associated with it, and the impact of the storms on the person who has bonded well with the symbiont. The reader will recall some of Carrik's behaviors and illnesses and realize that it is the symbiont that was behind most of it. The symbiont will forever alter Killashandra's





chemistry, her senses and her ability to heal, leaving her unable to ever leave Ballybran for very long, if at all. However, none of this frightens Killashandra until she realizes her options are now gone. This shows the reader that Killashandra's determination to be the best outweighs her sense of self-preservation, a quality that should get her through some difficult times if it does not kill her.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

When Killashandra and the others land on Ballybran, they are quickly taken into the main guild building and assigned to rooms in the recruit hall. Killashandra, Rimbol, and Shillawn take rooms next to one another while Carigana takes a room as far from the others as possible. After a long bath, Killashandra meets the others in the recruit lounge. Their instructor, Tukulom, describes to them what they should expect in ten days or so when the symbiont fever begins. Their rooms are designed to monitor their health and Tukulom assures them that they will receive adequate medical care the moment symptoms appear. In the meantime, they are to attend lectures on the history of the planet, the geography of the planet, learn to pilot the various vehicles used on the planet, and help out the support staff wherever necessary.

After Tukulom's departure, the recruits enjoy some of the refreshments from the catering station, including Yarran beer, a favorite of Rimbol's. They discuss the symbiont fever and some of the disabilities they could be left with when it is over. Killashandra makes a graceful exit with another recruit. The next morning, the recruits attend their first set of lectures. In mid afternoon the students view the charter of the Heptite Guild and are shocked to learn that not only does the guild take thirty percent of their earnings, but they also charge for all the expenses the recruits rack up during training, expenses that are taken out of their first few paychecks. Despite their unhappiness with this fact, the recruits realize there is nothing they can do about it now. Most of the recruits drink heavily that night as they wallow in their anger. Killashandra spends the night with Rimbol.

The next day, Shillawn soothes Killashandra and Rimbol's anger a little when he tells them that even at the lowest pay, it will only take about a year and a half to repay their debt. Later, the recruits learn how to handle the various vehicles used on Ballybran on simulators. After passing her tests, Killashandra signs out a skimmer so that she might see some of the geography she has only studied at this point. Killashandra travels out to the Milekey Range, named after one of the original crystal singers, to see the area that Carrik spoke of so often. Out in the range, Killashandra can feel the vibration of the crystal and begins to understand the obsession with crystal she noticed in both Carrik and Borella. Then Killashandra takes the skimmer back where she runs into a worker who is clearly deaf and who clearly takes his job much too seriously. Afterward, Killashandra explores the guild building rather than return and face the other recruits.

The next day, there is a terrible storm. Due to the storm, multiple crystal singers were coming in off the ranges with supplies of crystal. The recruits are called down to the hangers to help unload the crystal. The wind is overwhelming and Killashandra and the other recruits find it nearly impossible to make their way between the hanger and the sorting areas. At the end of the day, they are all worn out and covered in minor scratches from wind burn. Lanzecki tells the recruits that they can order anything they



want from the catering stations because they will not be debited as a reward for their work. At the same time, Killashandra overhears that several crystal singers were lost in the storm.

The next day Killashandra is exceedingly sore. The catering station immediately offers her a medicinal drink, leading her to ask if the computer is aware of her pain. Killashandra feels that the computer has invaded her sense of privacy. Later, the recruits are sent to the sorting room to help sort the crystal. Killashandra is assigned to Enthor, an older man whose vision was impacted by the symbiont fever. Enthor, however, is very good at his job and is often assigned black crystal because he can judge it better than others. In fact, one crystal singer brings his crystals to Enthor in particular when he feels another sorter misjudged it. Lanzecki intervenes and pacifies the crystal singer. Killashandra takes a special interest in the crystal sorter, thinking that if she cannot be a crystal singer that it might not be so bad being a sorter. At least she will still be allowed to handle crystal. That night, the recruits are pleased to realize they are getting paid for their efforts and were paid danger pay the day before. Over the next two days, the recruits continue helping the sorters. Killashandra is pleased to be there when Enthor unpacks a grouping of five crystals, a highly valuable find for both the crystal singer and the guild. Then Enthor has Killashandra pick her own case to unpack and she is surprised to discover that she seems to have a sensitivity for black crystal. However, she nearly ruins the crystal when she cries out in awe.

A few days later, the recruits are assigned to help clean up the crystal singer's sleds so that they can be prepared to return to the ranges. Carigana refuses to help and spends the next few days locked in her room. Killashandra and the others, however, help. Killashandra works the first day with an older man who is deaf. They work well together and Killashandra learns a great deal about the crystal singer's habits from the worker. The next day, Killashandra works with Rimbol and they clean eight sleds before the crystal singers appear and begin leaving the hangar. Afterward, Rimbol and Killashandra join the others in the lounge where they gossip. Shillawn tells them that the guild cannot outright punish Carigana for her behavior, but they can make her very uncomfortable. Then their conversation turns to the symbiont fever because they have been on Ballybran for nine days now.

The next day it is back to lectures. Some of the others confront Carigana, but Killashandra stays out of it. The next day, the recruits go to see some of the farms out on the Joslin plateau. In the hangar, the students see a sled that has been damaged in the storm and recovered. Killashandra sleeps uneasily that night, therefore she does not notice the next morning when several of the other recruits are missing, including Rimbol. When Shillawn notices and they check Rimbol's room, they discover that he and all his things are gone. Mistra and Carigana are also gone. The instructor tells them that they are being well cared for in the infirmary. The recruits are sent back to training, including a trip to a meteorological station, but the trip is marred by Jezerey's collapse. Killashandra finds hard work keeps her mind off of the situation. However, when she wakes the next morning, she is shocked to discover that her eyesight seems more intense and her sense of touch is more sensitive. When Killashandra attempts to leave



her room, Tukulom is waiting for her with Guild medics who instruct her to follow them to the infirmary.

## Chapter 5 Analysis

As Killashandra and her co-recruits land on Ballybran and begin their training, Killashandra tries to be more social than she ever was before at music school, determined not to shut people out but to embrace friendship. To this end, Killashandra becomes especially close to several of the other recruits, especially Rimbol. However, there is another student who refuses to be social, who acts something like the reader imagines Killashandra must have done while she was at music school. Carigana is a space worker who was apparently lost in space for some amount of time, a situation that has left her uncomfortable with social situations. Carigana seems hostile, refusing to be social or to help with certain optional work assignments given to the recruits. This makes Carigana a target of ridicule and gossip, the same sort of hostility that Killashandra is familiar with and trying to avoid.

As Killashandra and the other recruits are asked to help out in an emergency situation, unloading crystal singer sleds and sorting crystal, Killashandra gets to experience the other jobs available on Ballybran. Killashandra has an affinity for the crystal that becomes more obvious as she actually handles some of the crystal. Killashandra seems to sense black crystal, the more valuable of the crystals available on Ballybran, suggesting that Killashandra might be able to use this gift to her benefit when she has gone through the symbiont fever and is allowed to train as a crystal singer or another job.

The threat of the symbiont fever continues to burden the recruits. Many of the recruits are frightened about this fever, including Killashandra, afraid of what disability they might be left with if the connection does not go well. Killashandra has met a man with vision problems and several others who are deaf. While deafness might be a benefit on a planet where wind storms can cause overwhelming sound can cause instant insanity. However, Killashandra cannot bear the idea of never being able to hear music again.

When the fever finally comes, Rimbol is one of the first to suffer it. Although Killashandra and Rimbol have become lovers, her concern for him is overshadowed by her fear for herself. When the fever finally comes to Killashandra, however, her symptoms are nearly nonexistent, causing the reader to wonder what the big deal was. Perhaps the warnings they received were dramatized. The reader must wonder if maybe, on the other hand, that Killashandra is somehow having an easier time of it for some special reason.



# Chapters 6-7

## Chapters 6-7 Summary

Chapter 6. Killashandra is taken to the infirmary, but she does not want to be treated because she does not feel ill. All Killashandra wants is to find out how her friends are doing. The doctor, Antona, encourages Killashandra to settle in her room and try to relax. Killashandra finds a way to watch the vital signs of the others in the infirmary and becomes deeply upset when the vital signs for the patient in the room next to Rimbol's suddenly stops. Killashandra learns that Carigana has died. Antona tells her later that she believes Carigana died because she was resistant to the symbiont. Antona then tells Killashandra that she has had what is called a Milekey transition, and there is no reason for her to be in the infirmary. Trag, the deputy Guild Master, comes and takes Killashandra to her new quarters on the crystal singer's level.

Killashandra is given a bracelet that will identify her as a crystal singer until she goes out to the ranges the first time. Trag then tells Killashandra that she is to meet with the cutter technician to have her cutter made. Trag then leaves Killashandra in her new rooms, which are much larger and more luxurious than anything she has experienced up to this point. Killashandra begins a voice recording, recording the important facts of her life in case she begin having memory problems when she goes out to the ranges. Killashandra then orders new furniture for her rooms.

Concerna, a crystal singer who has been injured, arrives to walk Killashandra to the cutter technician. The technician, a temperamental man, begins the process of making the cutter. Then Killashandra goes with Concerna to a small training room where she begins to memorize the guild regulations. For the next few days, Killashandra spends her days divided between drills with Concerna and working with the cutter technician. Then Killashandra begins working in the sled-simulator to learn how to fly a crystal singer's sled in a multitude of situations. The instructor seems unhappy with Killashandra's skills. One afternoon while in the hanger for her simulator practice, a storm comes in and the crystal singers begin arriving. Killashandra overhears that one of the crystal singers, Keborgon, is missing. Killashandra lingers in the hanger so she is the only one there when Keborgon crashes outside the hanger. Killashandra goes with the rescue crew and helps unload the crystal from his sled. Killashandra then takes her crate of crystal straight to Enthor because she can sense it is black crystal. It turns out to be a triad of black crystals. Lanzencki comes in and tells them that Keborgon had died. After leaving the sorting room, Killashandra sees that the storm has gone. Killashandra takes a skimmer out and follows the marks of Keborgon's crash.

Chapter 7. Back in her rooms, Killashandra does research on the computers and pinpoints an area where she thinks Keborgon's claim might be. Aware that his death leaves the claim open to anyone, Killashandra is suddenly anxious to get out into the ranges. Killashandra wants to get to the ranges before someone else can take Keborgon's claim. A few days later, Killashandra learns that her cutter is ready. When



Killashandra goes to pick it up, she runs into Rimbol. He tells Killashandra that twenty-nine from the class made it to be crystal singers. Shillawn, however, was left deaf and is now assigned to research. When Killashandra and Rimbol run into Jezerey, Mistra, and a few others, Jezerey is clearly suspicious of Killashandra because she is so far ahead of them in her training.

Killashandra is walking down the hall when the singer who was rude about the recruits when they first came to the planet accosts her for carrying the cutter in such a way that could cause someone to be injured. When Borella joins them, Killashandra is surprised when she does not remember her. Killashandra then goes to a training room where she is to learn how to use the cutter. Trag is waiting for her and Killashandra is a little surprised to find he will be her instructor. Trag sets Killashandra to retuning spoiled crystal. Lanzecki comes by and checks on Killashandra's progress himself, catching everyone by surprise. Over the next week, Killashandra's training schedule progresses basically the same. Then on her rest day Killashandra has a meal with her former classmates. Jezerey is once again rude to Killashandra because she is still so far ahead of the others, but Rimbol remains loyal to her. Over the next few weeks, Killashandra becomes distracted as she looks for Lanzecki to show up as has become his pattern, but then she learns he is not on the planet.

Killashandra is summoned to the Guild Master's office that same afternoon. Lanzecki surprises Killashandra by telling her he knows she is searching for Keborgon's claim and that he wants her to find it. In fact, with the Passover storms coming in less than two months, Lanzecki tells Killashandra that he plans to arrange for a shepherd, an experienced crystal singer, to take her out and show her how cutting crystal is done in the ranges. After that, she will be free to hunt for Keborgon's claim. Lanzecki even shows Killashandra a map of the area where she thinks Keborgon's claim might be with five claims marked. After their conversation, Lanzecki sets out to seduce Killashandra.

## Chapters 6-7 Analysis

Killashandra learns that she has had what is called a Milekey transition that leaves her unharmed and ready to begin training. Since all the others are suffering fevers and other side effects of the symbiont, Killashandra is alone to begin training. This has its pros and cons. Killashandra is able to learn in a one on one situation that gives her the benefit of her teacher's full attention. However, when the others begin their training there is some unhappiness about her situation and her training. Killashandra has worked hard to cultivate relationships with the other recruits only to find herself suddenly on the outs once again.

Killashandra's training goes so well that she appears to have garnered the attention of the Guild Master, Lanzecki. In fact, Killashandra seems to have some natural properties that will make her a very successful crystal singer. This leads not only to extra attention from the powers that be, but also leads to what appears to be the beginning of an affair between her and the Guild Master.



Killashandra is still in training when she learns that one of the crystal singers has died. This leads Killashandra to desire finding his black crystal claim. However, Killashandra must finish her training before she can go out into the ranges. A black crystal claim could be a real coup for Killashandra because black crystal is the most valuable crystal on the planet and Killashandra seems to have a natural ability to sense it. All of this seems to foreshadow a very successful career for Killashandra.





# Chapters 8-10

## Chapters 8-10 Summary

Chapter 8. Killashandra wakes with Lanzecki the next morning and they discuss the guild and its future. Lanzecki tells Killashandra that he once sang crystal. The next morning, Lanzecki introduces Killashandra to Moksoon, her shepherd. Moksoon and Killashandra both pledge to the shepherd arrangement and promise not to jump one another's claims. Moksoon, however, has a memory problem and continuously forgets who Killashandra is as they travel to his claim. However, when Killashandra figures out how to keep their arrangement in the forefront of his mind, she learns a great deal from his work. The next morning, however, Killashandra decides to leave before Moksoon wakes and tries to kill her.

Chapter 9. Killashandra goes to the coordinates of the area where she thinks Keborgon's claim is and finds several claims marked with paint. One has fresh paint on it and Killashandra starts to move on, but then realizes that it was by placing the fresh paint on the claim that made Keborgon get caught in the storm, leading to his death. Killashandra sets down her sled and searches for the claim. She has some trouble at first, but eventually finds it. When Killashandra is surrounded by the black crystal she falls into a trance that it takes her a while to break. The following day, Killashandra begins her cutting. When Killashandra handles the first crystal she has cut, she again falls into something of a trance that takes up a great deal of the day. Killashandra is more careful the rest of the day and the following day as she continues to cut crystal. Then the weather turns and Killashandra must leave the area.

Killashandra takes a wild path out of the area to mask where her claim is from other crystal singers. This path takes Killashandra unwittingly over Moksoon's claim. Killashandra stops when she sees that Moksoon is not preparing to leave. Killashandra tries to get him to leave, but he has forgotten her and thinks she has come to steal his claim. They fight and Killashandra knocks him unconscious. Killashandra must then transfer her cartons and cutter into Moksoon's sled so she can transport them both back to the hanger. When she arrives, Lanzecki wants to see her right away, but Killashandra ignores the order so that she can take her black crystal straight to Enthor. Killashandra is dressed down in front of everyone by Lanzecki for ignoring his order and for jumping a claim, even if it was to save Moksoon, and for losing her new sled.

Chapter 10. It turns out her cuts of black crystal will be more than enough to replace Killashandra's sled and get her a new one. Killashandra goes exhausted to her rooms. Lanzecki comes to her and makes sure she has something to eat before she rests. The following day, Lanzecki calls Killashandra to his office. On the way, Killashandra runs into Rimbol. At Lanzecki's he feeds her and explains that her symbiont is eating for a hibernation period during the Passover storms. Then Lanzecki tells Killashandra that he wants her to install the crystals she brought in, which were just recently purchased by an ore mining planet called the Trundimoux System. Lanzecki explains that the





Passover storms can be dangerous for crystal singers, especially her because of her Milekey transition and her recent trip to the ranges. Killashandra agrees to think about it.

The next morning, Killashandra goes to hand in her cutter at the cutter technicians when she overhears Borella talking about her desire to be off planet during the Passover storms, and making a catty comment about how Killashandra and the other new crystal singers will not be able to leave. Killashandra then goes to watch a movie about the past Passover storms when she becomes overwhelmed with hunger. Killashandra goes to Antona, who takes her to the catering center for a large meal. Antona confirms most of what Lanzecki has told Killashandra about the coming Passover storms, telling her that she will be placed in a drug induced coma to help her through the worst of it. Later, Killashandra is joined by her former classmates where she tries to tell them what it is like to be on the ranges, but then she falls into a crystal trance. All of this combined makes Killashandra decide to take Lanzecki up on his offer.

## Chapters 8-10 Analysis

Killashandra finally gets out to the ranges, but she must first survive her shepherd. Moksoon nearly kills Killashandra several times when he forgets why she is there and thinks she is trying to steal his claim. This illustrates the loss of memory that the crystal singers have all seen hints of and heard rumors about, but have not really experienced yet. Then Killashandra finds her own claim and experiences firsthand what it is like to handle and cut the crystal. On several occasions, Killashandra falls into a trance of sorts as she communes with the crystal and experiences what it is like to be forced away from her crystal, to feel the pain of loss.

Killashandra proves to be a natural crystal singer. However, the career has its physical downfalls and Killashandra is beginning to experience them. One of them is the symbiont's need to overeat in preparations for the Passover storms. The Passover storms are very bad, very long storms that impact all the people on Ballybran in various ways. The crystal singers experience it in the worst way, suffering from the overwhelming sounds of the wind blowing through the crystals, causing a great amount of sonic type sounds. Lanzecki expects that Killashandra will experience it to a most difficult degree because of her special attributes and her recent trip to the ranges. For this reason, he is moving her off the planet.

Lanzecki is an interesting factor at this point in the plot. Killashandra has had two other lovers in this novel and she has taken a little something from each of them, if only companionship and information. With Lanzecki it seems different. Killashandra did not initiate this relationship, but she is clearly enjoying it. Lanzecki is an older man, probably much older than even the reader can truly appreciate. Lanzecki is gentle with Killashandra, clearly a man who cares deeply for her. However, the reader must wonder what his real intention is with Killashandra if the reader takes into account that Lanzecki is part of a corporation whose very survival is based on the type of crystal that Killashandra can bring in.



# Chapters 11-12

## Chapters 11-12 Summary

Chapter 11. Killashandra makes another recording to help her future recollections. Then Lanzecki joins her for dinner. Lanzecki gives her more details about the installation job, informing her that Trag will train her. The next day, Trag uses fake black crystal to show her how to do the installation, training her to do it very quickly. The following day Killashandra has a meal with her former classmates. On the way out, Killashandra runs into Trag who quickly drags her off to the shuttle. The Trundimoux ship arrived sooner than expected and is waiting for Killashandra. Killashandra takes the shuttle to the spaceport where she is met by two Trundimoux officers. Andurs, the ship's captain Killashandra befriended on her arrival, whisks her off to fill her with food before she boards the Trundimoux ship because he knows she will not be able to get the food she requires on ship.

On the Trundimoux ship, two female crew member are assigned to help Killashandra get from place to place, women she nicknames Tic and Tac because she did not understand their real names. Killashandra has a meal with the officers and meets the supercargo officer who proves to be a real friend. The following day, Killashandra asks the supercargo officer, Pendel, to help her get some of the food on a list Antona gave to her. Pendel arranges for the food to be taken from the medical officer's supplies, causing the medical officer to become very upset. Later, in a conversation with another officer, Killashandra learns that the Trundimoux system is very isolated from their lack of reliable communication and that her crystals will change that. However, Killashandra also learns that the use of crystal is not a popular idea on Trundimoux.

Chapter 12. Killashandra settles in for five days as she waits for them to reach Trundimoux. When they do, Killashandra is called to the bridge where the captain describes to her how she will be sent to the mining stations where she is to install two of the crystals. Killashandra is warned that she will only have six minutes to complete her task. Killashandra is beginning to experience some of the drowsiness Antona and Lanzecki have warned her about, so she takes a stimulant that Antona supplied to keep her focused. The first installation goes well, as do the next three. When Killashandra lands on the planet to install the final of the five crystals, she is surprised to find protestors outside. Killashandra installs the crystal and is quickly overwhelmed by the sound of the king crystal communicating with the other four. Killashandra falls again into something like a trance. When the captain makes her leave, Killashandra is overwhelmed with a sense of loss. Killashandra then boards the ship and allows herself to finally experience the deep sleep her symbiont craves.



## Chapters 11-12 Analysis

Killashandra and Lanzecki grow closer as he continues to educate her on her chosen profession. Then Killashandra finds herself yanked off the planet when the Trundimoux arrives early. Killashandra's physical condition continues to baffle her and forces her to eat a tremendous amount of food. This proves to be a difficult situation when she discovers that the Trundimoux are not prepared to meet her nutritional requirements. This causes some tension between Killashandra and some of the officers on the ship.

As Killashandra begins to install her crystals on the Trundimoux system, she begins to experience another part of the aspects of crystal singing that she has not expected. As a result, Killashandra experiences a great feeling of loss when she leaves the last of the crystals. This seems to explain some of the behaviors of the crystal singers Killashandra has witnessed since she became aware of this profession.

Even as Killashandra is going through the loss of her crystal, her body begins to hibernate because of the Passover storms back on Ballybran. This causes Killashandra to further annoy her new companions on the Trundimoux ship as she begins to fall into sleep at unexpected times. The impact of the symbiont was talked about a lot at the beginning of the novel, but Killashandra is just beginning to realize what a change on her life it will cause. Not only this, but it is also clear that many people outside of Ballybran do not understand and will never understand.



# Chapter 13 and Reprise

## Chapter 13 and Reprise Summary

Chapter 13. Killashandra sleeps for three days, and then wakes to the annoying concern of the medical officer. Killashandra manages to ignore him and get some food from Pendel. Tic comes and thanks Killashandra for her help in improving communications on their planet because she was able to speak to her mother for the first time in a long time. The captain comes and tries to force Killashandra to undergo a medical exam, but she pulls out her FSP authority and tells him he has no right to make her do anything. Killashandra then tells him that she plans to leave his ship on the first opportunity. Pendel then helps Killashandra find passage back to Ballybran on a Shelkite ship.

Reprise. Killashandra arrives at the Shankill Moon Base and tries to get a room in the Guild section, but learns they are full. Killashandra gets a room on the tourist side and is told that she smells badly because of the Shelkite ship. Killashandra goes to her room and takes several baths before she feels better. Then Lanzecki arrives and yells at her for returning too soon. Killashandra tells Lanzecki about her trip.

## Chapter 13 and Reprise Analysis

Killashandra has enough of the attitude of the Trundimoux officers and arranges for passage off their ship. It seems clear now why crystal singers have such an unfortunate reputation. Killashandra does not mean to be unpleasant, she simply has needs that no one but Pendel understands.

Killashandra returns to Shankill and must take a room because the Passover storms are still taking place on the planet surface. This seems to be a fortuitous situation because Lanzecki is on the moon base, too, and he joins Killashandra. This leaves the reader wondering where this relationship will go and how Killashandra's profession will impact it in future books of this series.



# Characters

## Killashandra Ree

Killashandra Ree is a music student who has worked ten years to be a soloist, to be the lead in operas and other musicals. However, Killashandra fails her final test because of a small flaw in her voice. Killashandra is so devastated that she leaves the school immediately and considers taking a job in a distant place. Killashandra meets a crystal singer who takes her off on vacation with him. Killashandra learns what it means to be a crystal singer and is intrigued by the idea that is a small organization, providing many opportunities to be a star. Despite many warnings against the profession, Killashandra decides to apply.

Killashandra makes her way through the recruitment process of the Heptite Guild and learns the true dangers of being a crystal singer. Despite mild doubts, Killashandra takes the oath and joins the guild. After ten days of general training, Killashandra and her classmates undergo the symbiont fever, though Killashandra never gets very ill. Killashandra then begins earnest training to be a crystal singer before the rest of her class. This causes some jealousy among the others, but Killashandra finds herself out on the ranges long before the others with a claim that includes the most valuable crystal, black crystal.

Killashandra is a very ambitious girl who works hard and places her own health in danger in order to get what she wants. This leads Killashandra to the Heptite Guild and crystal singing, a very dangerous career that is also very rewarding.

## Guild Master Lanzecki

Guild Master Lanzecki is the man in charge of all the crystal singers on Ballybran. Killashandra first meets Lanzecki when she arrives at the Shankill Moon Base with Carrik. Lanzecki gives Killashandra a thousand credits and a ticket to anywhere ships fly as a reward. However, Lanzecki refuses to stop and speak to Killashandra as she would like to give her information on being a crystal singer. This is Killashandra's first impression of him, and it is not a kind one. However, as Killashandra begins training as a crystal singer, she begins to see other sides of Lanzecki as he oversees the actions of the crystal singers.

When Killashandra gets her symbiont and is quickly transferred to begin her training as a crystal singer, Lanzecki shows direct interest in her progress. In time, Lanzecki begins not only overseeing Killashandra's training, but encouraging her to search for her own claim the moment she goes out onto the ranges. Killashandra and Lanzecki also begin an affair that is hidden from the others. Lanzecki is the first of Killashandra's lovers who appears to really care about her and who wants good things for her future. However,



Lanzecki makes it clear that his interest in her is as much about her value to the guild as his interest in her.

## Rimbol

Rimbol is a recruit for the Heptite Guild when Killashandra first meets him in the guild office on the Shankill Moon Base. Rimbol is bright and funny, a good-looking young man who quickly wins Killashandra's attention. Killashandra and Rimbol go through crystal singing training together and become casual lovers during this time period. When Rimbol becomes ill with the symbiont fever, Killashandra shows concern for his wellbeing, but quickly forgets about Rimbol and the others who were in her class when she begins crystal singing training before all of them. However, Rimbol does not forget her and attempts to renew their friendship during his training. Killashandra remains friends with Rimbol even after she begins an affair with Lanzecki.

## Shillawn

Shillawn is a nervous passenger on a space shuttle when Killashandra first meets him. Killashandra tries to avoid him and his questions about the crystal singers on the ship. Later, on Shankill, Killashandra cannot avoid him and ends up evading his questions by claiming he is infringing on her privacy. However, when Rimbol is there as a buffer, Killashandra finds Shillawn to be a kind, if a little overbearing, man. They become good friends during their training. Unfortunately, Shillawn loses his hearing during the symbiont fever and is unable to become a crystal singer. Shillawn becomes a researcher on Ballybran instead.

## Carigana

Carigana is a space worker who was once lost in space for a long period of time. This has caused Carigana to be antisocial, spending most of her time during crystal singer training either alone or challenging everything the instructor has to say. Most of the recruits dislike Carigana, but Killashandra can see in Carigana the same fears and misplaced self-confidence she herself felt while at music school. For this reason, Killashandra does not go out of her way to be helpful to Carigana, but she also does not go out of her way to torture or annoy Carigana. In the end, Carigana dies of the symbiont fever. Killashandra is told that this is most likely because Carigana resisted the symbiont on a subconscious level.

## Carrik

Carrik is a crystal singer on vacation when Killashandra meets him. Carrik befriends Killashandra in a spaceport restaurant on the day she learns that all her dreams will never come true. Carrik is gentle with Killashandra and invites her to enjoy his vacation with him. During their time together, Carrik tells Killashandra about the Heptite Guild and



some of what it is like to be a crystal singer. Killashandra is so impressed with the Heptite Guild on paper that she convinces Carrik to allow her to travel back to Ballybran with him so that she might become a crystal singer as well. Unfortunately, Carrik is fatally injured by that final sonic blast of a shuttle explosion before they leave Fuerte. After delivering Carrik back to Ballybran, Killashandra never sees him again.

## Borella

Borella is a crystal singer who delivers a lecture to the new recruits revealing the dangers of crystal singing and living on Ballybran. Borella has been injured, badly cut on the leg, and has taken this job as she waits to be allowed to go back to crystal singing. Borella is clearly intelligent and sophisticated. However, in later encounters, Killashandra finds Borella catty and forgetful. Borella does not even remember who Killashandra is from one meeting to the next.

## Moksoon

Moksoon is a crystal singer. When Killashandra is ready to go to the ranges for the first time, Moksoon is assigned to be her shepherd, an experienced crystal singer who will show her how it is done. However, Moksoon's memory is so bad that he forgets who Killashandra is from minute to minute. In fact, Moksoon tries to kill Killashandra several times when he finds her on his claim during this time period. Finally Killashandra decides to leave Moksoon a day early in order to protect herself from his lapses of memory. Four days later, Killashandra finds herself over Moksoon's claim during a storm and she decides to save him, but is once again nearly killed when he thinks she is trying to steal his claim. Killashandra does save Moksoon from the storm, but she loses her sled and earns the anger of the Guild Master.

## Andurs

Andurs is a captain of a space shuttle Killashandra meets while transporting Carrik back to Ballybran. Andurs gives Killashandra a great deal of information about the crystal singers and Ballybran. In fact, Killashandra becomes good friends, but she refuses to take his advice to get far away from Ballybran. Later, after Killashandra is a crystal singer and she is preparing to travel to the Trundimoux system to install crystal, Andurs pulls her aside and feeds her, trying to prepare her for the trip. However, Killashandra does not really remember him and gets his name wrong.

## Maestro Valdi

Maestro Valdi is Killashandra's music teacher on Fuerte. Maestro Valdi is a kind, gentle man who feels responsible for Killashandra's disappointment. When Killashandra disappears, Maestro Valdi becomes concerned for her safety and alerts the security at the spaceport. When Killashandra and Carrik try to leave the planet, Killashandra is

detained for Maestro Valdi who tries to convince Killashandra that being a crystal singer is dangerous. Killashandra remembers Valdi's words throughout her training, but she sees them as something to prove wrong.





# Objects/Places

## Lute

When Killashandra leaves the music school, the only things she takes with her besides her clothing is a lute she made as part of her education. When she becomes a crystal singer, Killashandra hangs the lute in her rooms.

## Voice Recordings

Crystal singers often make voice recordings of important information from their lives because cutting crystal and the connection between the singer and the crystal can often lead to memory problems.

## Black Crystal

Black crystal is a substance like crystal that takes on a black hue when it is exposed to warm temperatures. Black crystal is the most valuable crystal on Ballybran because it is in high demand for communication devices.

## Cartons

When crystal singers cut crystal, they immediately pack the crystals into cartons specially designed to keep the crystals safe until they reach the sorting facility.

## Cutters

Cutters are instruments that crystal singers use to cut crystal. The cutters are built to fit perfectly in a crystal singer's hand and to respond only to their singer's voice.

## Sled

Each crystal cutter is given a sled to take out into the ranges. This sled not only is a vehicle by which the crystal singer travels, but it also provides a sleeping place, cargo space for cut crystal, and a catering station for meals.

## Skimmer

A skimmer is a smaller vehicle that recruits are allowed to use to go on short trips out into the continent on which they are being trained.



## Symbiont

A symbiont is an entity that becomes connected to a humanoid host and makes it possible for humanoids to exist on the hostile environment of Ballybran. This symbiont can improve the senses and slow the aging process considerably, as well as make healing much faster.

## Crystal Singer

A crystal singer is a person who finds and cuts crystal on Ballybran. They are called crystal singers because they use musical notes to cut the crystal.

## Heptite Guild

The Heptite Guild is the name of the organization that employs the crystal singers on Ballybran. By becoming a recruit of the Heptite Guild, persons are given training to become crystal singers. However, if they fail to bond with their symbiont perfectly, these recruits are given support jobs within the organization and forced to remain on the planet for the remainder of their lives.

## Fuerte

Fuerte is Killashandra's home planet and where she attended music school. Fuerte is also where Killashandra meets Carrik.

## Ballybran

Ballybran is the name of the planet where the Heptite Guild mines crystal for the use in communication systems, spaceship engines, and other technical uses.

## Shankill Moon Base

Shankill Moon Base is a base on the Shankill moon that is one of three moons that orbit around Ballybran.

## Trundimoux System

Trundimoux System is a planet and its orbiting moons whose main purpose is to mine ore from asteroid belts surrounding the system. Killashandra goes here to install black crystal that will provide better, more reliable communications between the planet and its mining stations as well as the rest of the solar system.



# Themes

## Ambition

At the beginning of "Crystal Singer", the reader learns along with Killashandra that she has failed to become the star singer she has always wanted to be. Killashandra has worked for ten years toward this goal and learning that she has failed is devastating to her. Killashandra has never thought of being anything else, therefore she finds herself struggling to understand what has happened. When Killashandra meets Carrik, she is adrift, wondering what the purpose of her life is.

Carrik gives Killashandra the impression that being a crystal singer is a very important job, giving him power over others. When Killashandra does a little research and learns that the Heptite Guild is very small and there is good opportunity for her to be a star as a crystal singer, she jumps at the opportunity even though even Carrik himself tries to talk her out of it. Killashandra hears a lot of reason why she should not aspire to the Heptite Guild, but she is so set on the idea of finally finding something at which she can be a star that she refuses to back off.

Killashandra has her first doubts when she realizes that there is no turning back. This time, Killashandra understands that whether or not she will be a crystal singer is out of her hands, she begins to focus on other jobs as well. Killashandra has learned her lesson and she is prepared for doing another job, even though she still really wants to be a crystal singer. In the end, Killashandra gets what she wants. Not only does Killashandra become a crystal singer, but she discovers that because of her genetic makeup, she is destined to be a star crystal singer. This is everything Killashandra has ever wanted and she is very pleased with her situation. It is for these reasons that ambition is a theme of the novel.

## Romance

Romance is a theme of this novel because despite the sci-fi genre of the novel and the somewhat technical aspects of Killashandra's existence on Ballybran, there is a great deal of romance going on both in her life and around her. The novel begins with Killashandra meeting Carrik, a crystal singer on vacation. Carrik is a gregarious, fun-loving man who shows Killashandra how to enjoy life. It is Carrik who pulls Killashandra out of her initial funk of learning she will never be a star soloist and shows her that there is more to life than her narrow ambitions.

When Killashandra begins training as a crystal singer, she is determined not to isolate herself as she did at music school and to be more social. To this end, Killashandra begins a casual affair with fellow recruit, Rimbol. Rimbol is a kind, ambitious young man who is a good friend to Killashandra throughout the novel.



When Killashandra begins the real training to be a crystal singer after everyone becomes ill with the symbiont fever, Killashandra finds herself of personal interest of the Guild Master. Lanzecki is interested in Killashandra because she has a natural affinity for black crystal and because she had a Milekey transition with the symbiont, suggesting that she will be a very successful crystal singer. Not only this, but Lanzecki also has a personal interest in Killashandra. Killashandra and Lanzecki begin an affair that they keep quiet from the other crystal singers. Lanzecki is clearly concerned for Killashandra, showing the reader that this is a more adult relationship than the others that Killashandra has had. For this reason, romance is a theme of the novel.

## Danger

Danger is a theme in "Crystal Singer" because from the moment Killashandra learns about crystal singers and the Heptite Guild, she is told how dangerous both are. Killashandra listens to this information, learning that crystal singers often suffer odd illnesses, even witnessing the manifestation of this illness in Carrik, and that there is something wrong with the natural bacteria or soil on Ballybran that often makes humanoids ill. However, Killashandra also learns that crystal singers are a rare bred and there is a large potential for advancement, therefore she does not listen to the warnings of danger.

When Killashandra passes the initial tests to become a crystal singer, she then learns that truth about the dangers of being a crystal singer. Again Killashandra refuses to let these things scare her off of what she wants. Then when everyone else begins getting sick from the symbiont fever, Killashandra becomes concerned for her own health, worried about losing her hearing and never being able to hear music again. However, in the end Killashandra again ignores all the dangers of becoming a crystal singer and becomes a very successful crystal singer on her first trip to the ranges. Therefore, even though the main character ignores this theme, danger is definitely an important theme of the overall plot of the novel.

# Style

## Point of View

The point of view is third person. The point of view shows the story mostly through Killashandra's eyes. However, there are quite a few times when the narration gives the impression of the authorial voice, in which the author will suggest knowledge of events that have not yet happened. There is also a point at which the narrator appears to be unreliable. Killashandra runs into a captain that she is good friends with after she becomes a crystal singer and she cannot remember his name. She does, however, correctly recall the name of his ship, tipping the reader off that she is dealing with the same captain who was once a friend.

The point of view of this novel works well with the plot because it offers an intimate view of the main character, delving into her mind and her emotions, but retaining some distance to allow the reader to appreciate the overall impact of the plots conflicts on the main character rather than just her reactions to it. The point of view also allows the reader to know a few things that perhaps the main character did not know or fully understand at the time in which the events took place. This gives the reader a glimpse into some of the tension that will come into the plot later in the novel. The unreliable narrator aspect of the point of view also allows the reader to see that the memory damage that appears to happen to most of the crystal singers is already happening to Killashandra even though she has only been to the ranges once. For these reasons, the point of view works well with the overall plot of the novel.

## Setting

"Crystal Singer" takes place in the future, sometime after the year 3068GY. The novel begins on the planet Fuerte where Killashandra was born on a farm and attended music school. From Fuerte, the setting moves to Shankill Moon Base and then to the planet Ballybran. It is on Ballybran that most of the novel takes place because this is the planet where Killashandra trains to and becomes a crystal singer.

The futuristic setting of the novel gives the novel a sense of the sci-fi, using space ships and technology that has yet to be invented. This future setting also allows for the special profession for which Killashandra trains and becomes a member of. If the novel were not set in the future, the profession would make little sense to modern readers. The author creates believable settings without going into too much detail about these alien places and without confusing the reader in such a way that the story becomes too overwhelmed by sci-fi details. This makes the novel easier to read, therefore the setting works well with the plot.



## Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is English. The author uses a sophisticated language that reflects a higher education for her main character. The language, however, is not so sophisticated that a younger reader might have trouble with it. The language also does not include a great deal of made up words or phrases that the reader might not understand. In fact, most of the sci-fi aspects of the novel are simple words that are easy for the reader to understand, making the language easily decipherable for the average reader.

The novel is written in such a way that it appears to have been written by a person who lives in a future world and has a strong education. There are some aspects of the language that seem a little too sophisticated for the average reader, but much of the novel is easy to understand. The language is authentic to the characters and to the genre, making it perfect for the plot of this novel.

## Structure

The novel is divided into thirteen chapters. Each chapter is exceedingly long, often covering weeks of time. The novel is written both with narration and dialogue, but a great amount of the novel is written in a type of internal monologue that does not include a great deal of scenes or interaction with other characters. The novel is also very detailed, telling many details of Killashandra's daily activities and training as a crystal singer.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot of the novel deals with Killashandra's ambition to become a star at some profession. One subplot follows Killashandra as she struggles to become more social rather than shutting out other in an effort to keep her mind on the prize. Another subplot follows Killashandra as she worries about the effects of the symbiont and the possibility that she might be left with a disability. All of the plots come to a satisfying conclusion at the end of the novel.



## Quotes

"Killashandra listened as the words dropped with leaden fatality into her frozen belly."  
Chapter 1, pg. 6

"Killashandra was halfway to the spaceport before she consciously decided that that was where she ought to go—'ought' this time not in the obligatory but in an investigative sense." Chapter 2, pg. 12

"Conversely, she had been tremendously impressed by the Guild's tacit power: high-rank medicorps men had awaited Carrik at the three intermediary ports. She herself had been accorded the most deferential treatment." Chapter 3, pg. 34

"Ten days, was it? Killashandra thought. Who would be first? She looked about her, shrugged, and forced her mind to follow Tukulom's words." Chapter 5, pg. 122

"Glancing back over her shoulder, she saw that every head was turned in his direction. Once again, she had made a major exit without an audience." Chapter 5, pg. 129

"Killashandra also managed to extract from data retrieval the fact that injured Singers like Concera and Borella undertook the role of preceptor because of the bonus involved. That explained the spiteful remarks and ambivalent poses." Chapter 6, pg. 140

"Avoiding restrictions and defying laws were completely in the human condition."  
Chapter 7, pg. 149

"She closed her eyes against the incredible sensation the lightest touch of his lips created within her." Chapter 8, pg. 170

"Lanzecki swept away from Enthor's table and walked down the long room to the farthest exit, thus emphasizing that he had come on discipline." Chapter 9, pg. 199

"She could get lost in touching crystal." Chapter 12, pg. 250

"She laughed and then cried because there was no one to know except herself that she had achieved an ambition." Chapter 13, pg. 266

"She hoped that for every Francu she met, there would be at least one Pendel to be grateful for." Reprise, pg. 268



## Topics for Discussion

Who is Killashandra? Why has she been told she will never be a star soloist? Why did Killashandra think that this was the only possibility for her future? How does Killashandra handle disappointment? What does she plan to do with her future? How is this plan sidetracked? Who sidetracks it?

What is a crystal singer? Who is the first crystal singer Killashandra meets? Why does Killashandra decide she wants to be a crystal singer? Why does Killashandra suggest that the first crystal singer she met might have talked down his profession in an attempt to trick her into become a crystal singer herself? Why does Killashandra refuse to listen to the multiple warnings she receives about crystal singing? What is dangerous about being a crystal singer?

What is a symbiont? How does the symbiont bond with its host? Why does Killashandra worry that the symbiont might leave her with some kind of disability? What is symbiont fever? Who suffers this fever? How does Killashandra respond to the symbiont? What is this called? Why is this unusual? What does this suggest for Killashandra's future?

Who is Carigana? Why does she annoy the other recruits? Why does Carigana go out of her way to avoid the others? Why does Carigana ask so many questions during lectures? What is Carigana's reaction to the Heptite Guild charter? How do the others respond to this? Why does Carigana refuse to help clean out the crystal singers' sleds? What happens to Carigana in the end? How does Killashandra feel about this?

Who is Lanzecki? Why does he begin to show a special interest in Killashandra? What is his role in the Heptite Guild? How does Killashandra feel about Lanzecki's interest in her? Why does Lanzecki encourage Killashandra to find Keborgon's claim? How does he help her? How do Killashandra and Lanzecki become lovers? How does Killashandra respond to this change in their relationship? How is this different from the other relationships Killashandra had in the novel?

What is crystal? What is it used for in this novel? How might this be possible? Why does Killashandra fall into a trance when she touches crystal? What is the nature of the connection between Killashandra and the crystal she cuts? Why does Killashandra feel a sense of loss when she installs the black crystal in the Trundimoux System?

What are some of the side effects of crystal singing? What is the first side effect Killashandra witnesses first hand? Why does this happen? When Killashandra lands on the Shankill Moon Base what opinion does she see that tourists and others have of crystal singers? What is behind this opinion? What other side effects does Killashandra begin to notice about crystal singers as she trains to become one herself? What is one of the first side effects Killashandra faces herself when she returns from her first trip to the ranges?